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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Guard helps youth “Stay on Track”

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South Dakota National Guard Drug Demand Reduction

RAPID CITY, S.D. (11/29/2007) - The South Dakota National Guard Drug Demand Reduction Team helped youth “Stay on Track” during October’s Red Ribbon Week celebrated by schools throughout South Dakota.

“Our youth are extremely influenced by outside sources, with media and TV,” said Patti Mudge, a sixth-grade English teacher at Rapid City’s North Middle School. “It is important for the youth to hear a different message by an authority figure and National Guard Soldiers fill that role.”

The National Guard Drug Demand Reduction Team teaches 10 “Stay on Track” classes a week at North Middle School.

“Our relationship with our education institutions is vital to keeping our youth healthy and safe,” said Capt. Don Johnson, coordinator for the program. “The ‘Stay on Track’ program has allowed the National Guard to grab the attention of young students and teach the negative affects of illegal drugs in a fun, learning environment.”

North Middle School embraced the new National Guard substance abuse curriculum by committing its entire school year and all 469 students to the counterdrug program.

“When working to help a school community change a climate, it is important that the entire community and its youth are receiving the same information to assist them to acquire the same skills to make better choices and decisions,” said Paula Long-Fox, school counselor.

During the 2007 Red Ribbon Week celebration, North Middle School chose “Stay on Track” as its theme for the week with students covering their school’s doors, hallways and classrooms with the counterdrug theme.

“I was totally amazed and overwhelmed by how a school building this size used its creativity with the ‘Stay on Track’ theme in so many different ways,” said Pam Teaney Thomas, youth development director for the Rapid City area schools.

The students and staff at North Middle School continued their support of the week-long event by spelling out, "STAY ON TRACK" for a National Guard helicopter flyover on Friday, Oct. 19, on the school's athletic field.

The National Guard teaches the "Stay on Track" curriculum at two other South Dakota schools reaching more than 600 youth and provides other counterdrug programs to more than 80 schools throughout the state.

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Photo cut line: North Middle School students and staff show off their Red Ribbon Week spirit by displaying their Stay on Track theme on Oct. 19 in Rapid City, S.D. (Army Photo by 1st Sgt. Donald Matthews)(RELEASED)

Link to photo: https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/North_Middle_School.jpg